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ABSTRACT

The Right-to-Read Program outlined in this document is an ungraded project for kindergarten through third grade, which utilizes individual diagnostic tests to place pupils at their instructional levels of reading and to prescribe plans of individualized instruction based on specific curriculum objectives. The document sketches the development of the project and its first two years of operation (1972-1973 and 1973-1974), including background, project activities, evaluation strategy, the validity and reliability of the instrument, and project results. The average rate of gain across all instructional levels was 2.14 years for 1972-1973 and 1.52 years for 1973-1974. Charts accompany the text. (JM)

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PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PROCESS
(THE GLASSBORO RIGHT-TO-READ PROGRAM)

Glassboro Public Schools
Glassboro, New Jersey

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Validated by the National Validation Procedure of the States
ESEA Title III – 1974

Validation Team Chairman: Dr. Martin Higgins

Approved for National Dissemination by the USOE
Dissemination Review Panel – 1974
Panel Chairman: Dr. John Evans
Deputy U.S. Commissioner of Education

TECHNICAL REPORT #7
Office of Program Development
Division of Research, Planning and Evaluation
New Jersey State Department of Education
Robert W. Ward, Director

003 131

Approved by the USOE Dissemination Review Panel, 1974

PROGRAM AREA: Elementary School
Reading, Individualized Instruction

PROJECT TITLE: K-3 Reading: Program Development Through Process (a Right to Read Program)

LOCATION: Glassboro, New Jersey

SOURCE AND LEVEL OF FUNDING:

Jan. 1971 - Sept. 1972	$50,000
Sept. 1972 - Aug. 1973	42,000
Sept. 1973 - Aug. 1974	38,000
Sept. 1974 - June 1975	7,882

Right-To-Read Program

ESEA, Title III, Office of Program Development, State Education Department of New Jersey.

NEED: After the school district identified reading as a priority concern, a local task force was formed. This group carried out a district-wide needs assessment in reading. The group found that teachers were dissatisfied with the methods they were using to teach reading and wanted to change.

Assessment of classroom practices showed that the majority of teachers had placed children for reading in three groups. This practice could accomodate a range no greater than three levels within a given classroom. Actual ranges revealed in the needs assessment were greater than three levels in any given group. It was assumed, therefore, that children were inappropriately placed for instructional purposes.

Testing of *311* children with the Classroom Reading Inventory indicated an abnormal distribution of reading instructional levels. While the children tested, pre and post were mostly second and third year beyond Kindergarten, the greatest number clustered around the pre-primer level of operation.

Individual intelligence testing of all children in the Primary Unit, with the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test resulted in a mean I.Q. score of 117. The PPVT reports a standard error for I.Q. scores in the age range tested of about eight (8). It is reasonable to assume that with a normal distribution of intelligence a normal distribution of actual reading levels should exist.

CONTEXT: Glassboro, like many other semi-urban centers, is made up of socially, culturally, and economically diverse neighborhood sub communities, including neighborhoods, where children are economically secure and culturally enriched and neighborhoods where there is a preponderance of children who are economically and culturally disadvantaged

Census figures for 1970, indicated that Glassboro had a population of 13,938. Its Puerto Rican population is largely found in the eastern section of the town and on the farms in the rural surrounding areas. The black population is concentrated in

two areas. The black inhabitants of the western section have been compacted into a low-rent, segregated housing project which was erected as a part of an urban renewal program. Like most urban housing projects, the Elsmere Project has its share of broken homes, fatherless families, unemployment, people on welfare, crime, and hopelessness.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

Goal #1

An average growth rate of 1.5 years in reading achievement during an 8 month instructional period will result from the placement of children (as determined by individual diagnostic testing of pupils) at their instructional level of reading and individualized teaching of reading at that level.

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

This project began with the development of a process for improving the school district reading program at all levels through involvement of school personnel and community members. The first step was getting board and administrative commitment to identify student reading improvement needs, and to provide time for planning. The next step was the selection of a special task force to work on the improvement of the district reading program. This committee included one central office person, one principal, two reading teachers from the school which had been selected to implement whatever was developed for the reading program, two parents from the school's PTA, and a reading specialist. The committee met with the school staff to explain the program and what it hoped to produce. The committee then developed an elaborate sequence of activities for carrying out a comprehensive needs assessment on student reading including data on achievement, plus parent, general community, and teacher attitudes. Special forms were developed and used for this activity. Surveys were conducted using these instruments. A handbook for parents was also produced including sections on language development and suggestions for improving the home environment to help children improve language skills. Other materials with a related objective were produced for teachers.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

The project staff, working with teachers, developed a set of reading objectives for levels K-3. These were drawn primarily from the Houghton-Mifflin readers and supplementary books which are used in the Glassboro system. Staff were trained in diagnosis of reading difficulties and prescribing of appropriate activities. Charts were prepared for use by classroom teachers to keep a running record of pupil placement by reading objective. Teachers use a wide variety of materials to teach reading in this project. Each desk is considered a "learning station". There is frequent grouping and re-grouping of students to meet specific reading needs. The staff has devised a series of forms for use by teachers (e.g. Class Record Sheet-Criterion Referenced Inventories) in providing an individually tailored program for each child.

COST:

No extra personnel are needed in the district which adopts the Glassboro Right-to-Read Program. An already employed Reading Supervisor can act as the Project Director, unless the district wants to employ an extra person for this function. The

major cost consideration is training of teachers who will carry out the diagnostic-prescriptive activities which are the heart of the program. Glassboro estimates a need for 20 hours of pre-service training in diagnosing and prescribing in elementary reading as well as classroom management and instructional record-keeping. After the start of implementation, there is an estimated need for about one hour per week of in-service training and planning. Both the in-service and pre-service needs can be met through the use of release time, if such is available. If not, training time compensation is according to local salary schedules. No special materials are required. The Glassboro model begins with a needs assessment which may point to specific kinds of needs in the adopting district which require materials not already available. It is anticipated, however, that reading materials already on hand will be usable in most cases.

EVALUATION STRATEGY: Goal #1

An average frowth rate of 1.5 years in reading achievement during an 8 month instructional period will result from the placement of children at appropriate instructional levels of reading and individualized teaching of reading at that level.

The "Right-to-Read" program involves all teachers and all children in the primary unit, i.e., Academy Street School and J. Harvey Rodgers School. It is an experiment without a control group. Both schools are K-3. Approximately 325 children and 25 teachers in two schools have been involved in the program. Schools are ungraded levels K-3.

Children were given pre and post tests to assess individual gains (and identify average gain levels, and describe growth among groups in the two schools.) Testing was done over a two year period (1972-1974). Published instruments were used.

For the 1972-1973 school year, the Classroom Reading Inventory was used.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT:

The Classroom Reading Inventory (CRI) was developed by Dr. Nicholas J. Silvaroli of Arizona State University and is published by the William Brown Co. of Dubuque, Iowa. The developer says that the CRI is designed for use by the elementary classroom teacher who has not had experience with diagnostic instruments in reading instruction (as was the case with the Glassboro teaching staff). The CRI is administered individually and includes both oral and silent reading activities for the pupil. Four scores or ratings are recorded by the teacher for each pupil, as follows:

1) Comprehension of oral language.
2) Frustration reading level.
3) Instructional reading level.
4) Independent reading level.

The Instructional level is used to determine the point at which children can be grouped for reading instruction. The frustration and independent levels represent upper and lower limits respectively.

The CRI was reviewed by Donald F. Cleland in the Seventh Mental Measurements Yearbook (Buros, 1973). He described it as "a most valuable adjunct to any reading program." Farr (1969) summarized numerous studies comparing informal reading inventories with standardized tests and concluded that the informal inventories are both more valid and more reliable than the standardized tests because they use a variety of procedures and provide more data on each pupil.

To assess the reliability of the CRI, the Glassboro staff checked for inter-rater reliability with the following procedure: 3 students were chosen at random from the project group; five teachers were similarly selected. Each teacher was asked to examine each of the pupils using the CRI and to provide scores for each on the three reading levels. Table 1 summarizes the results of this check.

TABLE 1
Ratings of the same 3 pupils by 5 teachers using the CRI

	LEVELS								
TEACHER	INDEPENDENT			INSTRUCTIONAL			FRUSTRATION		
	PUPIL			PUPIL			PUPIL		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
1	P	N.E.*	6	2	P	8	3	1	9
2	P	N.E.	6	1-2	P	8	3	1	9
3	P	N.E.	6	1-2	P	8	3	1	9
4	P	N.E.	6	2	P	8	3	1-2	N.E.
5	–	–	6	–	P	8	–	1	9

*N.E. = No evidence.

The agreement among the 5 raters is self-evident, and is close to unity. Pupils A and C were rated identically by all raters (missing data due to absence of either teacher or ratee). Pupils B and C were also rated identically. In all other cases, the variance is slight. This supports the reliability of the CRI for assessing a student's ability level in reading.

RESULTS:

For this assessment, instructional reading level ratings were used. Children were pretested with the CRI in September, 1972 and post-tested in April, 1973. The use of diagnostic instruments to chart trends in the development of students in reading over time is recommended by many authorities, (Strand, 1964; Farr, 1969; Potter and Rae, 1973). Such instruments have also been recommended for evaluating the effects of new programs, (Potter and Rae, 1973).

Frequency counts were done on pupils by reading level for both pre and post administrations of the CRI. These data are displayed as histograms in Figure 1.

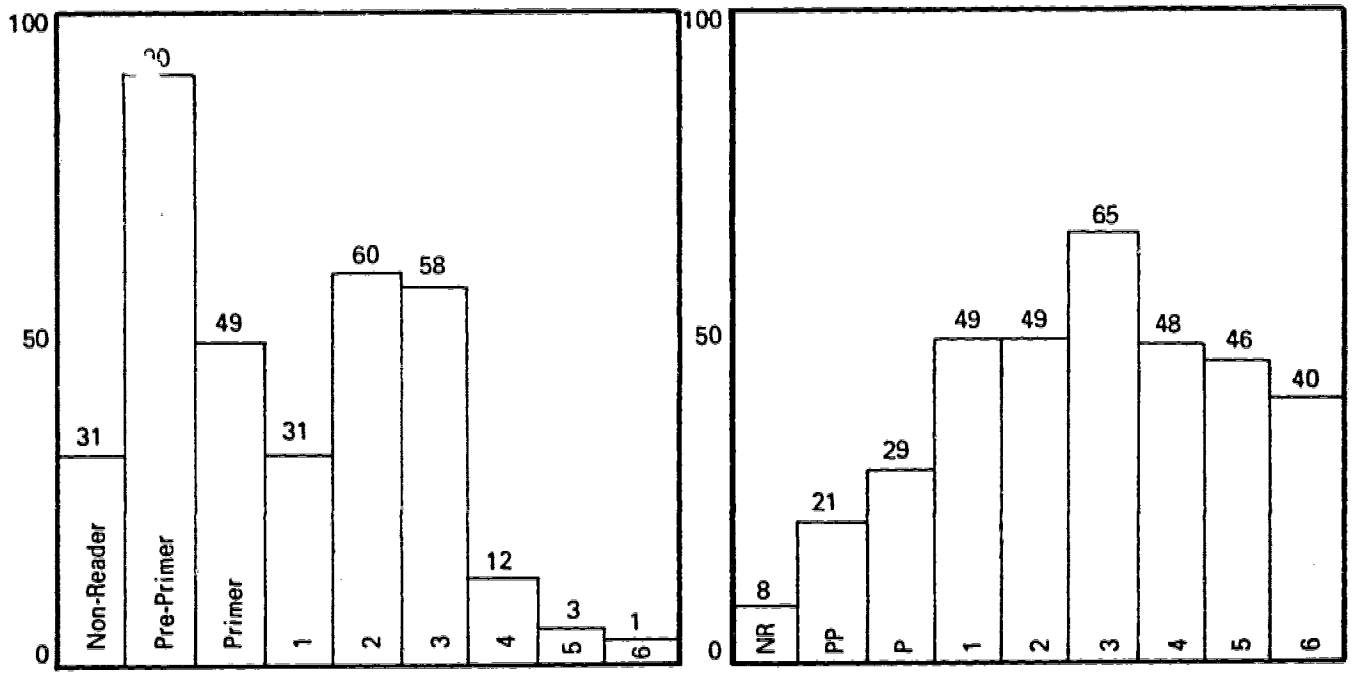

Figure 1. Pre and post instructional reading levels for all students in the Glassboro Right-to-Read Program as measured by the Classroom Reading Inventory.

These data are for children who would normally be in grades K-3. The Glassboro Program, however, is ungraded. Hence, there is considerable age-overlap in instructional groups. The pre-test data showed a bi-modal, asymmetrical distribution of students with modes at the PP (pre-primer) and 2nd grade levels. With 26.8% of the pupils at the pre-primer level, there was clearly a need for change. The post-test data show that appropriate placement of students for reading instruction has smoothed out the distribution until it is symmetrical with the mode now at the 3rd grade level.

This finding supported the hypothesis that appropriate placement of pupils in terms of reading levels would improve achievement. To further articulate this finding, data were analyzed to determine average gains for students at all instructional levels in the program. This was done to determine whether, in fact, reading gains were being made by all students in the program. Figure 2 displays these data.

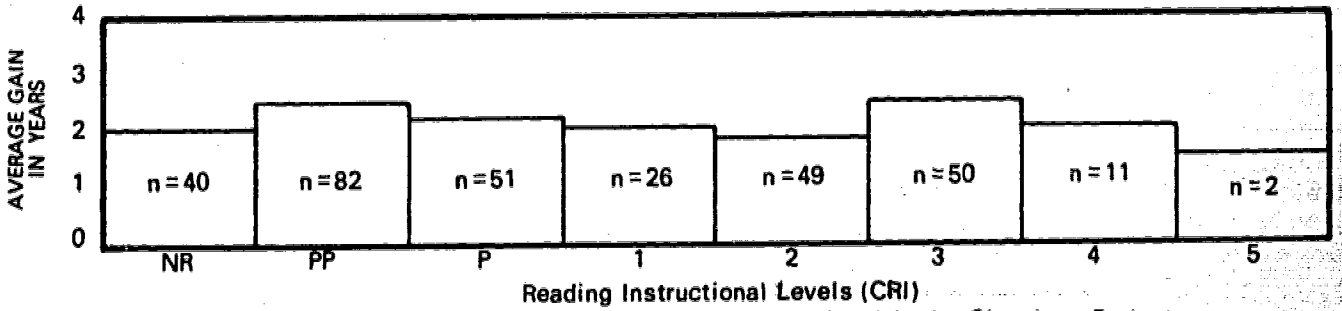

Figure 2. Average gains in reading instructional level in the Glassboro Project.

These data are plotted in terms of average gain for each instructional reading level. The n's do not affect the shape of the distribution. The finding is that there was an average gain of 2.14 years across all levels. The group thus exceeded the goal of an average gain of 1.5 years.

SECOND YEAR DATA (1972-73):

Since the school was using the Houghton-Mifflin readers as part of its program of elementary reading instruction, it was decided to use the Houghton-Mifflin criterion-referenced test which places the student at his level in the Houghton-Mifflin series of readers and supplementary materials. This test is high on content validity.

To measure growth in reading, students were again pre and post-tested with the new instrument. The pre-testing was done in September, 1973. Post-testing was done in April, 1974. The results, as displayed in Figure 3, showed a general smoothing out of the distribution. The bi-modality of the pre-test distribution is accounted for by the influx of new kindergarten students at the lower end, and gains from the first year of Right-to-Read at the upper end.

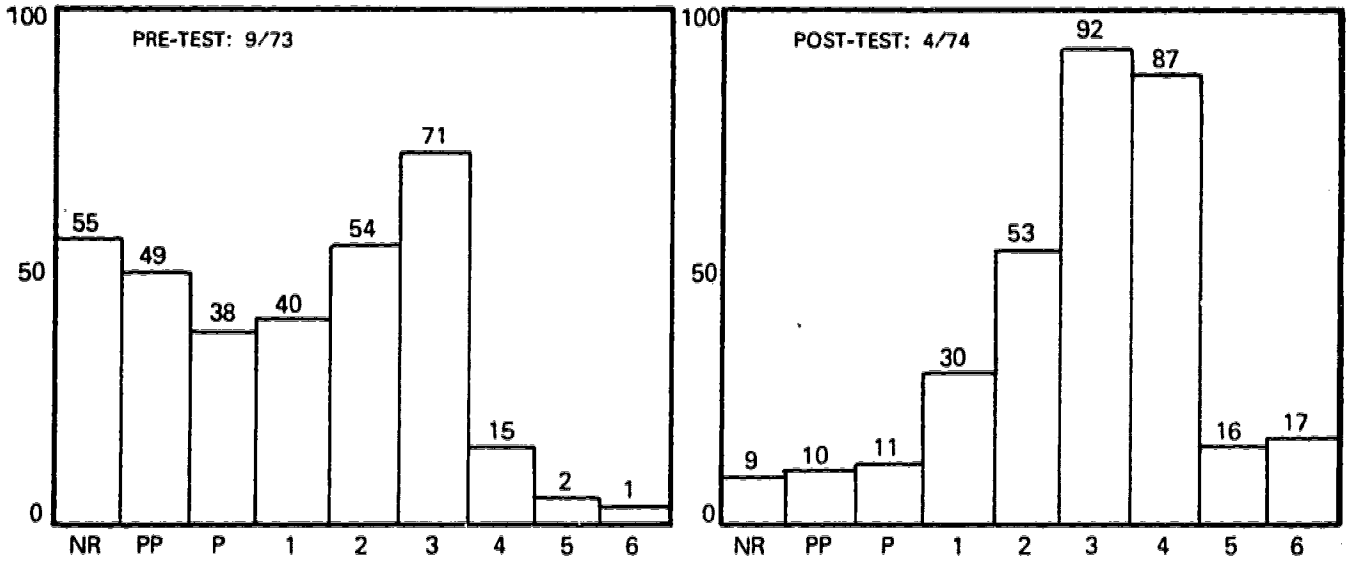

Figure 3. Pre and post instructional reading levels for all students in the second year of the Glassboro Project as measured by the Houghton-Mifflin tests.

These data show, in general, a shift from a bi-modal to a more symmetrical distribution which is slightly skewed towards higher achievement levels. To determine average gains for all levels, the data displayed in Figure 4 were compiled.

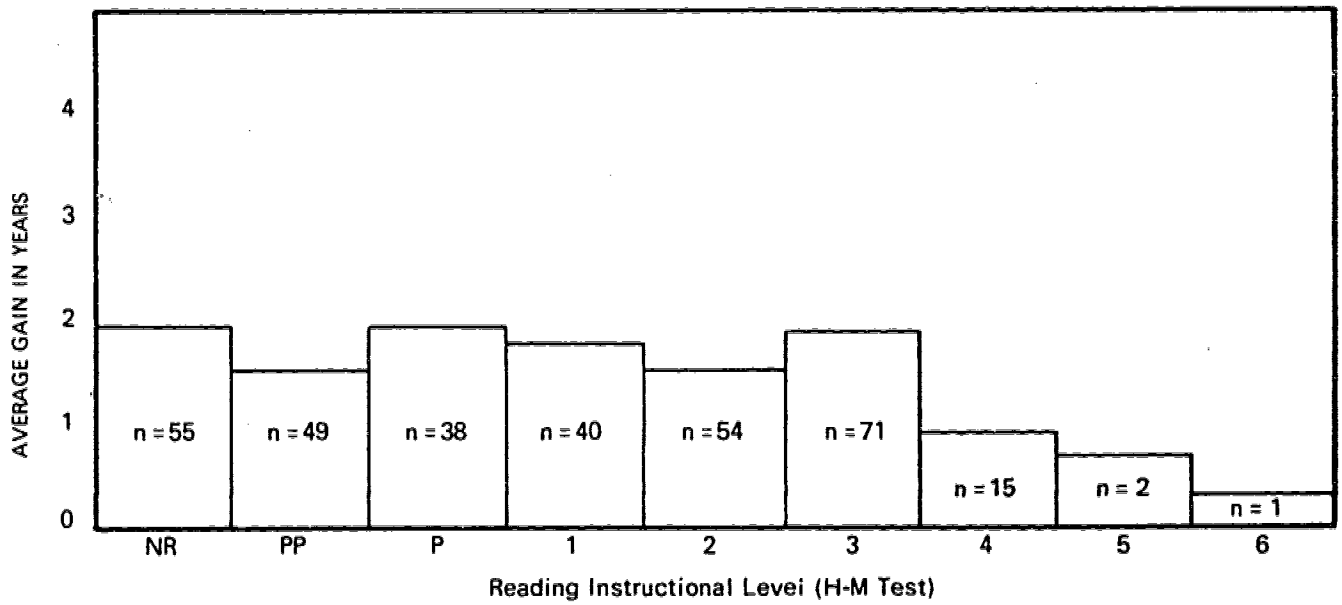

Figure 4. Average gains in reading level (instructional) in the second year of the Glassboro Project.

The average rate of gain across all instructional levels was 1.52 years. In both years, the stated goal was achieved by this project.

CONCLUSIONS: Children of average achievement levels can progress at a better than average rate in reading skills when they are diagnostically placed at appropriate instructional levels and are provided with a prescriptive program based on specific curriculum objectives.

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3. Mary C. Austin, *Reading Evaluation,* Ronald Press, 1961.

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